तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

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Harinama and Book Distribution

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

Regarding your question: Is it all right to assign the entire *saṅkīrtana* party for distributing books so that no one will be free for street chanting? We should not have a narrow understand of the meaning of *saṅkīrtana* — that it only means chanting and dancing and playing instruments. No, *saṅkīrtana* means to glorify the Lord in a congregational manner. So if many devotees are going out daily on the streets and public places for distributing our literature, that is also *saṅkīrtana*, even if there is no one chanting. Hearing and chanting are essential processes for *saṅkīrtana*. So if someone hears us singing on the street or if he purchases a book and reads it sincerely, these two activities are the same.

If there is some necessity, if there are not very many men available, or if there is some prohibition by the municipal authorities — something like that — then we may assign everyone to distributing our literatures. There is no loss in doing that. However, it is always better if there are also some devotees chanting loudly on the street. If there are even one or two men, or a small party who are chanting Hare Krishna, that will increase the book sales. So, if there are sufficient men, and if we have the sanction of the authorities, it is always better to have at least a small party chanting along with as many distributors of books as possible.

— Letter to Ravindra Svarupa. 5 January 1973.

The Highest Principle

From the Life of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

"In the early days, before I ever met Srila Prabhupada, his letters were vitally instructive and enlightening. In one letter that came to Tamal Krishna Maharaja in Bury Place in 1970, there was an admonition. Tamal had asked, "What is more important, *saṅkīrtan*, rounds, devotional service, or our health?" Prabhupada answered, 'The highest principle is to save yourself.'"

— *Remembrance by Yogesvar Das. The Memories* Video, part 18. Illumination Television. Eugene, Oregon.

next column

Miserliness

Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode
Śrī Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta *3.3*

Miserliness is very contaminating for the devotee. There is miserliness of behavior, miserliness of wealth, and miserliness of effort. When dealing with a *vaiṣṇava*, the devotee should stand up when he approaches and care for him attentively. He should give general respect and gifts to the brahmins. He should properly clothe and shelter his dependents. He should take items from others for a suitable price. He should pay taxes to the king. He should show gratitude to benefactors, give food to the poor, medicine to the sick, and cloth to those suffering from cold weather. If he treats everyone in the world properly then the fault of miserliness will not arise. It is even enough if, having nothing else, he simply speaks nicely. By proper speech, by wealth, and by his own labor, he should behave generously with others. Lack of proper behavior is forbidden for the devotee.

— English translation by Sri Bhanu Swami. Unpublished manuscript.

Attracting People with Kirtan

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada

As the original spiritual master of the entire world, Sri Chaitanyadev has instructed us to congregationally chant the holy name of Krishna so that the contamination within our hearts will be vanquished. All glories to Sri Krishna *saṅkīrtana*! At present, however, we are so averse to the service of the Lord that we are not prepared to hear *kīrtana* unless it gives pleasure to our senses. That is why there is an arrangement to glorify the Lord by means of songs that are pleasing to the ears. For those who have no interest in hearing about Lord Hari except in the form of songs, for them we sing the glories of Lord Hari so that they receive the message, just as a bitter pill is coated with sugar.

People have already made up their mind that they will hear anything but *hari-kathā*. For their benefit, we have to perform *hari-kīrtana*. As mustard cake and salt is mixed with a cow's food when she doesn't want to eat, so we mix some pleasing songs with *hari-kathā* so that it will be attractive to all. In this way, people can curb their propensity to hear film songs by hearing songs about Sri Sri Radha Krishna. *Kīrtana* is meant for attracting the audience towards hearing.

Some people may say, "Krishna is immoral. He is just another historical personality, and so what is the use of hearing about him? We would rather hear about the heroic activities of Napoleon."

To relieve people from such a mentality, *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana* is necessary. As deer and snakes can be charmed by music and songs, if *hari-kathā* is presented in the form of songs then even the minds of materialists will be attracted. Proper *kīrtana* means to reject dry, unauthorized, and adverse *kīrtana*. Even the discussions of renunciation that are presented in the Upanishads are insignificant when compared to *saṅkīrtana*.

At present we take pleasure in discussing mundane topics. Renunciation means to stop sense enjoyment. We try to enjoy our senses, thinking that this will increase our happiness. But, when we understand that the stage after enjoyment is suffering, we try to stop our enjoyment. That is called renunciation.

— Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur. *Bhāgavat Tātparya*. English translation by Bhumipati Das. Rasbihari Lal and Sons. Vrindavan. 2005. Pages 58-59.

Two Frogs Visit the Ganga

Adapted from the Padma Purāṇa, canto 7, chapter 9

jāhnavī-tīra-yātrāyāṁ daivād yasya bhavet pathi
pañcatā so 'pi paramaṁ dhāma-gacchen na saṁśayaḥ

There is no doubt that anyone who dies on the path when on pilgrimage to the Ganga will go to the highest abode. (Texts 77-78)

There was a religious and sweet-speaking king named Satyadharma on the earth during the junction of *Tretā* and *Dvāpara yugas*. The queen of that king was named Vijaya. She was beautiful, of good character, and highly devoted to the service of her husband. After enjoying for seven thousand years on this earth, the king and his wife died. The messengers of Yamaraja, the Lord of death, bound the couple up and took them to Yama's abode along a painful path. Seeing them, the Lord of death, who is also known as Dharmaraj, the great knower of religious principles, said to his secretary Chitragupta, "Inform us about the behavior of these two." Thus ordered by Yamaraja, Chitragupta considered the acts of the king and queen from the beginning of their lives, and said, "O king, please listen and I will tell all the activities of these two. Once there was a deer that had been frightened by tigers. To save its

life, it left the forest and came to the assembly of the king. Seeing the deer, the king became very curious. He got up, and with his sword, struck the hip of the deer. The king struck the deer even though it had sought his shelter. Therefore, O lord, this king, along with his wife, should be punished by you. He, along with millions of members of his family, should reside in hell for as many thousands of ages of Manu as the number of hairs on his body."

Then on order of Yamaraj, his messengers put the king and his wife in a very painful hell named Asi-patravana where the trees have leaves as sharp as swords. After suffering in that place for millions of *yugas*, he and his wife were put into the hell named Vyaghrabhaksya. That hell is full of all troubles. One who enters there becomes prey for tigers. The king, along with his wife, stayed there for thousands of millions of *yugas*, and when the reaction to their sins was finished they took birth again on the earth as male and female frogs. Living on the bank of a river, always eating insects and remembering their former lives, the two were very much pained.

Once, on an auspicious day, the two frogs saw some men who were going on the path to the Ganga. The male frog told his wife, "We are always suffering pain due to the sinful acts we performed in our last human life. It is said that even great sinners can be relieved of their reactions by leaving their bodies in the Ganga. Let us undertake a pilgrimage to the Ganga in order to die and thereby cross this ocean of agony." The female frog was delighted with the suggestion, and the two of them at once set out for the bank of the Ganga.

On the way they came across a poisonous and fearful serpent that had gone hungry for a long time. The deadly snake said, "O sinful frogs, your time of death has arrived. Therefore, you should be eaten by me, as I am very hungry."

The couple spoke with reverence to the serpent, "There is not the slightest fear of death in our hearts, o serpent. Formerly, I was a king named Satyadharma. This was my queen named Vijaya. Due to our sins we experienced pain for a long time in the abode of Yamaraja. To experience the remaining fruit of our karma we took birth as frogs. We desire to go to the highest abode. For that purpose we are going to the bank of Ganga to cast our bodies into her. O serpent, how much pleasure will you have by devouring us? Vishnu dwells in our hearts. In the same way Vishnu also dwells in your heart. Therefore, what enmity do we have with you, O serpent? The wise never harm other living beings. By giving harm to others, destiny takes away one's life, sons, wives, riches and glory. What is the use of chanting the names of deities, performing austerities, giving gifts, or doing sacrifices for one in whose heart the two syllables *"hiṁ-sā"*, harm, always remain? That person who harms a living being also harms Vishnu. The revered lord of Lakshmi lives in the bodies of all living beings. Therefore the body of a sentient being is the abode of Lord Vishnu himself. Thus, one should avoid doing harm to others. By destroying another's

life one's own pleasure is destroyed. Fie upon the happiness of men who are deceived by delusion and who relish causing harm to others! Therefore, O serpent, give up doing harm to others and be happy."

The snake said, "If killing others is truly a major sin, then why has the creator fashioned some living entities as prey and others as predators to eat them? You have told the truth that harm should not be done to others. But in the case of all types of prey, harm is not involved. It is true that the universe is a form of Vishnu. It is he who has created the prey and the predators. He creates himself and he protects himself. He also eats himself. Such is the creation of Vishnu. Am I able to kill you? Vishnu who is the creator of the individual's death, has sent me for this mission. That same god who created you, and who has protected you, today is using me as the instrument to kill you."

The serpent then ate those frogs on the path, who were intently uttering, "Ganga, Ganga". On every step of their pilgrimage to the Ganga, those two had obtained the fruits of performing horse-sacrifices.

Considering the pious credits of that king who had taken birth as a frog, celestial beauties such as Rambha, Urvasi and others in the heavenly planets, said to one another, "This very handsome man, who is the best of the pious, has come. With my service I shall bring him under my influence." Another *apsarā* said, "I know all the arts. Therefore, only I shall be the beloved of this king." Another said, "Even Indra is under my influence. What wonder then is there that this king will also be under my influence?" "He is my husband." "He is my lord." "He is my master." "He is my protector." In this way the celestial women, appreciating the good qualities of Satyadharma, spoke with great delight.

Hearing their talks, one virtuous woman said, "O ladies, what is the use of quarrelling? This king has already taken the charming Vijaya as his wife." Those celestial beauties then gave up quarrelling, and came there delighted at heart. They worshipped that king and his wife, who were free from sins, and washed their feet. Indra, the king of heaven, then put him and his wife in a celestial chariot decorated with flowers. The air was full of the auspicious sounds of various drums, sounds of bracelets, clapping of hands, and the shouts of victory given by the gods. Thus Satyadharma and Vijaya went to heaven seated in a chariot and being fanned with white *cāmaras* in the charming hands of divine ladies. Seeing Satyadharma, and fearing his own destruction, Indra gave him half of his throne.

By the mercy of Lord Vishnu, that king acted as Indra and enjoyed all the pleasures of the heavenly planets. After millions of yugas, on the order of Lord Vishnu he got into a chariot and went to Vaikuntha. Thus he and his wife obtained liberation.

Great sages like Narada, have declared that there is no restriction of time on going to the Ganga. Whenever a person takes bath in the Ganga they certainly obtain inexhaustible religious merit. The Ganga destroys all sins. However, if a person repeatedly commits sin, the Ganga does not purify them. If one desires the highest goal of life, then, giving up wicked thoughts, bathe in the Ganga, the mother of the world. It is possible to count the number of raindrops and dust particles on the earth, but it is not possible to completely describe the glories of the Ganga.

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